

# Report of Socialist Party of the United States to the International Socialist Congress at Copenhagen, 1910

## THE POLITICAL MOVEMENT.

The three-year period following the date of the last International Socialist Congress has been for the Socialists of America a period of hard struggle against adverse political and social conditions. It has witnessed many setbacks and disappointments for the Socialist Party, but also some victories and triumphs; and on the whole it has marked a distinct step in the direction of progress.

## THE POLITICAL CAMPAIGN OF 1908.

At the Stuttgart Congress we reported that in the congressional elections of 1906 the vote of the Socialist Party had fallen from 408,230 (cast for the Party's presidential candidate in 1904) to 330,158.

The local elections of the fall of 1907 showed no material increase over that figure.

This slight setback, however, did not discourage the Socialists of America. The presidential elections of 1908 found them prepared to enter into the campaign with greater vigor than ever. In that year the Socialist Party held its third national convention, which met in Chicago on May 10th. The representation was based on the enrolled dues-paying membership, each 200 members being represented by one delegate. On this basis the number of delegates in attendance was 219. The convention, which lasted eight days, again nominated Eugene V. Debs for the office of President and Benjamin Hanford for that of Vice-President of the United States, and made elaborate preparations for the conduct of the ensuing electoral contest.

The political situation was most inauspicious for the Socialist Party. The presidential election of 1904 had been conducted along general lines of conservatism and the Socialist Party was practically the only exponent of radicalism. As a consequence, it not only brought out its entire legitimate strength, but also received many votes from disgruntled radicals in the camps of the old parties. In the election of 1908, on the contrary, all political parties vied with each other in professions of radicalism. The Republicans were pledged to continue the "radical policies" of President Roosevelt, which included the program of "punishing rich malefactors," regulating the trusts and large corporations, extending the liability of employers within the jurisdiction of the federal government and several other popular reform measures. The Democratic party, still smarting under the effects of the heavy defeat of its conservative ticket and platform in the preceding election, revived all the slogans of its old-time middle-class radicalism and reinstated the prophet of that brand of radicalism, William J. Bryan, in the leadership of the party. The "radicalism" of the Democratic party was far exceeded by that of Mr. Hearst's Independence Party, and the latter was eclipsed by that of the People's Party. Under these conditions the vote of the Socialist Party was from the outset limited to thoroughgoing Socialists.

But the radicalism of the other political parties was not the only circumstance militating against the success of Socialism at the polls. The bulk of the Socialist vote always comes from the working class. The industrial depression which was then at its worst had caused large numbers of workers to migrate in search of work, thus depriving them of a fixed residence and disqualifying them as voters. And, last but not least, the direct and public indorsement of the Democratic Party by the officials of the American Federation of Labor and their appeal to organized labor for active support of the candidates of that party, could not but be detrimental to the Socialist campaign.

The Socialists realized the difficulties confronting them at this juncture, and endeavored to overcome them by redoubled zeal. From May 17, the date of the adjournment of the convention, until the day of election, November 8, the Socialist campaign



was in full blast. From thousands of meeting halls and street corners in almost all cities and towns of the Union, the voters were addressed by indefatigable Socialist propagandists, and Socialist literature was circulated in enormous quantities. The national office of the Socialist Party alone printed over 3,000,000 campaign leaflets, and the different state and local organizations of the party distributed at least four times that number.

### THE "RED SPECIAL" TRAIN.

A special feature of the campaign was the extraordinary speaking tour of Eugene V. Debs. In order to enable the eloquent candidate of the Socialist Party to speak in every part of the country, Mr. J. Mahlon Barnes, the party's secretary, conceived the idea of chartering a special "campaign train." This train was to consist of three cars, one to accommodate Mr. Debs and his companions, speakers, reporters, and managers of the enterprise; one to carry campaign literature, and one for the use of persons desiring to accompany the party over parts of the route. In this train Mr. Debs and his party were to cross the country from one end to the other, making several stops each day at minor points in order to address meetings from the tail end of the train and to distribute Socialist literature among the audiences. The train was to stop every evening at some important place on the route, where a large meeting could be arranged in advance, and to continue the journey in the night, so as to reach the next point of destination early on the following morning. The plan seemed very promising, but it required a large sum of money for its realization, and the treasury of the Socialist Party was depleted.

This obstacle, however, did not deter the indomitable Socialists. The officers of the party, relying on the never-failing Socialist enthusiasm and devotion, chartered a train, naming it the "Red Special," and called upon members for voluntary contributions to defray the expense. The call was issued on July 18, and during the three months following the national office was busy receipting contributions. A little less than \$35,000 was required for the enterprise, but more than \$40,000 was collected. This money was contributed by individual Socialists and by Socialist and radical labor organizations. It came in amounts ranging from a few cents to a few dollars. The number of individual contributions was probably no less than 15,000. From the point of view of Socialist propaganda, the "Red Special" was a signal success. Between August 30, the date of its starting, and November 2, when the tour was ended, Eugene V. Debs and his companions spoke in more than 300 towns and cities and in thirty-three states. They were received by eager and cheering crowds all along the line. "The Red Special," reported Debs in the early part of his tour, "has demonstrated beyond peradventure its great power as a propaganda machine. From the hour that it started it has made good a hundredfold every inch of the way, and I am sure that not a comrade who has seen the train in action regrets having contributed to make it possible. The enthusiasm it inspires everywhere is a marvel to me. If nothing else, it would be worth ten times its cost to the movement." Mr. Stephen M. Reynolds, who accompanied Debs all through the tour, estimates that the number of persons addressed by the Socialist candidate and other speakers on the train exceeded 800,000.

The vigor and enthusiasm of the campaign were such that the Socialists confidently expected a large increase of their vote, and even the non-Socialist press of the country freely predicted about a million votes for Eugene V. Debs. But the vote actually cast for him in that election was only 421,520, a slight increase over that of 1904, the Party's former high record.

### POLITICAL STRENGTH OF AMERICAN SOCIALISM.

The Socialist Party has no representation in the United States Congress, but it has elected a number of its members to state and local offices in some parts of the country. Its political stronghold is in the State of Wisconsin, and more particularly the principal city of that state, Milwaukee, in which it has been growing steadily and rapidly until it has reached a strength superior to that of the two old parties. In the city election of 1909, the Milwaukee Socialists carried the city by electing the head of the municipal ticket, an alderman-at-large. The last municipal election of Milwaukee, held in the spring of this year, witnessed the supreme test of strength between the Socialist Party and its capitalist rivals. The campaign was heated in the extreme on both sides, and when the vote was counted, it was found that the Socialist candidate for Mayor, Comrade Emil Seidel, had been elected by 27,622 votes, a plurality of about

6,000 over his nearest opponent. The Socialists also elected a majority of the board of aldermen and of the board of supervisors, and are thus in full control of the twelfth largest city in the United States. This is the first great political victory of American Socialism and is bound to have a very stimulating effect on the general political struggles of the Socialist Party in this country. The number of elected officials in the State of Wisconsin is about 150, among them one State Senator and three members of the Assembly. The town of Manitowoc has a Socialist mayor. The Socialist Party has also at various times within the last few years elected candidates to state or local offices in the States of Massachusetts, Montana, Ohio, Illinois, Colorado, and Pennsylvania.

### S. P. ORGANIZATIONS.

But, as already indicated, the progress of the Socialist movement in the United States can by no means be measured by its political strength and achievements alone. On January 1, 1907, the Socialist Party had regular state organizations in thirty-nine states of the Union, and these comprised about 1,900 local organizations, with a total membership of 26,784. At the present time the Party is fully organized in forty-two states; the number of its local organizations has increased to 3,200, and its average dues-paying membership in the first part of 1910 was 53,375.

### THE SOCIALIST PRESS.

Another indication of the increasing strength of the movement in the United States is the growth of the Socialist press. In 1907 the Socialist Party was supported by about fifty publications in different languages. There were no daily newspapers in the English language. Within the last years the number of strictly Socialist publications has increased to almost seventy. Of these over one-half are periodicals in the English language, three are daily newspapers, twelve are monthly magazines and the rest are weeklies. Twenty-nine Socialist periodicals are printed in foreign languages, as follows: Seven in German (of this number three are daily newspapers), three each in Finnish, Slavonic and Jewish; two each in Polish, Bohemian and Lettish, and one each in the following languages: French, Italian, Danish, Hungarian, Russian, Swedish and Norwegian. The first important daily newspaper of the Socialist Party was launched in Chicago in the fall of 1906, under the name of "Chicago Daily Socialist," and it was followed by the establishment of the "New York Daily Call" in New York, in May, 1908. In both cases the big enterprises were undertaken with ludicrously inadequate means, and the papers during the first period of their existence were engaged in a pathetic and seemingly hopeless struggle for life from day to day. The pluck and devotion of the men entrusted with the publication of the papers and the customary Socialist enthusiasm expressed in liberal gifts of money and gratuitous work have so far managed to overcome the almost insuperable difficulties. To-day the Chicago paper is practically self-sustaining, and the New York Call bids fair to reach that condition within a short time. Of the English periodicals, the "Appeal to Reason," a weekly paper, and "Wilshire's Magazine," a monthly publication, have each a circulation of about a quarter of a million copies, while the "Jewish Daily Forward" is said to sell almost 100,000 copies per day. Among the monthly Socialist magazines, one, "The Progressive Woman," is devoted primarily to the task of carrying the gospel of Socialism to women, and two others, "The Progressive Journal of Education" and "The Little Socialist," aim at educating the youth in the philosophy of Socialism.

### SOCIALISM AND ORGANIZED LABOR.

The Socialist movement in the United States has also of late made substantial progress among the organized workers of the country. While discussions on Socialism in the annual convention of the American Federation of Labor have largely been abandoned by the Socialist delegates as inexpedient and fruitless, the individual organizations within the Federation have developed a livelier interest in the subject than ever, and have on numerous occasions declared themselves unreservedly as favoring the Socialist program, or at least its most substantial points and planks. In 1907 sixteen national organizations of workmen, representing a total membership of 330,800, had thus endorsed the Socialist program, and in 1909 the United Mine Workers of America, one of the strongest organizations within the American Federation of Labor, at its national convention declared itself in favor of the cardinal aim of Socialism, the socialization of all material instruments of production. But more progress even than in the national organizations of labor has been made in the various local trade unions,



and there are to-day but few important labor organizations in the country which do not include a larger or smaller contingent of Socialists among their members.

In the beginning of 1908 the Socialist Party attempted to take a census of its enrolled members with the view of ascertaining their social positions, nationalities, trade-union affiliations, etc. The returns were, unfortunately, very incomplete, only 6,310 members, or less than one-sixth of the total, having reported. But as the members reporting represent no less than 37 different states, it is fair to assume that their conditions are quite typical of the members of the Socialist Party as a whole. From the returns thus obtained it appears that 66 per cent. of the party membership, or about 33,000 were workingmen, skilled and unskilled. Of these, 62 per cent., or about 21,000, were members of different trade unions. The ratio of enrolled Socialist Party members to Socialist voters in this country is about one to ten, and we may thus conclude that over 200,000 trade-union members vote the Socialist ticket. Deducting from the number of organized workers all women, minors, aliens, and other non-voters, we may estimate that the total voting strength of organized labor in this country is less than one million, and that over 20 per cent. of it is Socialism. This is by no means a very good showing, but it represents a considerable advance over former years.

And the industrial workers are not the only class among whom Socialism has made gains of late. The movement has made deep inroads among American farmers. In the National Socialist Convention of 1904, the farmers made their first appearance with five delegates, and in the convention of 1908 a very substantial proportion of the delegates consisted of active and typical farmers. In the Socialist Party census, mentioned above, 17 per cent. of all members gave their occupation as "farming," and in the last presidential election several purely agricultural states polled heavier Socialist votes than some of the states noted for factory industries.

#### PROPAGANDA AMONG WOMEN.

The Socialist Party has within the last few years paid great attention to the movement for the enfranchisement of women and to the propaganda of Socialism among women. The convention of the party in 1908 by its platform made the specific pledge that the Socialists of America would engage in an active campaign for unrestricted and equal suffrage for men and women, and the same convention created a National Women's Committee to conduct a systematic propaganda of Socialism among women. The party has also set aside one Sunday in the year as a day for demonstrations in behalf of woman suffrage, and the institution is rapidly gaining popularity and strength within the movement.

#### EDUCATION OF YOUTH.

Within the last few years also the Socialist Party of America has begun to turn its attention to the important task of educating the youth to an understanding of the Socialist philosophy. A large number of "Socialist Sunday Schools" for children and Socialist Study Clubs for young people have been organized in many parts of the country. The movement is still young, but very promising.

#### RECENT PARTY CONVENTION.

In the month of May of this year the Socialist Party of the United States held a convention which marks a decided departure from its former methods. In the past the Socialist Party, like all other political parties of the country, used to assemble in national council, once in four years, primarily for the purpose of nominating a candidate for the office of President of the United States. The last convention had nothing to do with nominations for political office. It was a national conference for the discussion of the theoretical and practical problems of the party on the model of the European Socialist conventions or conferences. Among the subjects discussed, the one of greatest interest was the problem of immigration of foreign laborers. For the workers of the United States, the subject is generally one of vital importance in view of the vast numbers of foreign workers annually arriving at the shores of the country. But the more acute phase of the problem is presented by the immigration of Asiatic labor on the Western coast. Organized labor in America is overwhelmingly of the conviction that such immigration is a menace to the American workers, and has taken a stand against the admission of Asiatic workers into this country, and the American Socialists thus find themselves in the difficult position of having to choose between the

apparent immediate interests of the working class of their country and the principle of international Socialist solidarity.

The convention, after a very thorough discussion on the subject, adopted the following resolution:

"The Socialist Party of the United States favors all legislative measures tending to prevent the immigration of strike-breakers and contract laborers and the mass importation of workers from foreign countries, brought about by the employing classes for the purpose of weakening the organizations of American labor and of lowering the standard of life of the American workers.

"The party is opposed to the exclusion of any immigrants on account of their race or nationality, and demands that the United States be at all times maintained as a free asylum for all men and women persecuted by the governments of their countries on account of their politics, religion or race."

#### INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS.

The relations between our party and the International Socialist Bureau and all its affiliated branches have been most pleasant, fraternal and cordial. All our publications of every kind and nature are regularly forwarded to the bureau. Obedient to its initiative necessary information has been transmitted to every country as required, and such financial aid as was possible was extended upon call.

The international spirit of the Socialist Party of America and its recognition of class solidarity can probably best be shown by the following table of figures:

##### 1907.

Russian S. D. L. P. and Bloody Sunday Fund (at 1908 close).....	\$3,312.01
Political Refugee Defense Fund.....	354.51
Italy Earthquake Fund.....	74.20
Swedish Strikers' Fund.....	6,318.91
Spanish Prisoners' Fund.....	305.35
Total .....	\$7,052.97

#### THE TRADE-UNION MOVEMENT.

The most important economic organization of labor in the United States is the American Federation of Labor. In our report of 1907 we estimated the number of workers affiliated with that organization at about 1,500,000. There has been but little change in its membership during the last year. The acute industrial depression of the last year has, as usual, had a somewhat deteriorating effect on the trade-union movement, but on the whole the organization of the Federation suffered but little from it.

The report of the last annual convention of the body, held in November, 1909, gives the following numbers of affiliated labor unions: International unions (extending over the United States and Canada), 177; state federations, 39; central labor bodies, 590; local trade and federal labor unions, 551.

#### THE FEDERATION IN POLITICS.

In our last report we described the first efforts of the American Federation of Labor in the field of politics in the congressional elections of 1906. It was the most inadequate and ludicrous campaign ever conducted by a large national body of organized workers. The Federation did not enter into it with a platform and candidates of its own, nor did it support the Socialist Party. It merely called upon the workers to choose among the candidates of the two dominant parties of the capitalist class in accordance with their supposed personal friendship for labor.

The campaign thus conducted made practically no impression on the politics of the country, and it is possible that the Federation would never have undertaken a similar one had it not been for the occurrence of an event of particular importance at that time.

#### THE "BUCK STOVE" INJUNCTION.

It was customary for the Federation to publish in the columns of its official organ, the "American Federationist," the names of employers against whom organized labor had special grievances. These names were published under the heading: "We Don't Patronize," and constituted the so-called "We Don't Patronize List" of the Federation.



Some time in 1907 the Buck Stove and Range Company of St. Louis made an attempt to increase the working hours of its employees, members of the International Brotherhood of Foundry Employees. The latter resisted the attempt. A strike followed, and all efforts on the part of the Brotherhood and the Federation to adjust the dispute foundered on the obstinacy of the president of the company, Mr. J. W. Van Cleave, who was also the president of the National Association of Manufacturers and a notorious enemy of organized labor. The name of the Buck Stove and Range Company was thereupon published in the "We Don't Patronize List" of the "American Federationist," and the company secured from Judge Clabough of the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia an order to show cause why the Federation and its officers should not be enjoined from continuing to publish its name on that list. The action seemed so subversive of the principles of personal liberty and freedom of the press, and so opposed to established precedents, that the officers of the Federation did not take it very seriously.

But on December 18, 1907, Judge Gould not only granted the order, but made it one of the most sweeping documents of the kind ever issued by a court in the United States. The order prohibited all officers and members of the American Federation of Labor and of all its affiliated organizations, their agents, friends, sympathizers and counsel, either as officials or as individuals, from making any reference whatsoever to the controversy between the Buck Stove and Range Company and its employees, by printed, written or spoken word, and particularly from referring to the boycott of organized labor against the company. The Federation promptly discontinued the publication of the "We Don't Patronize List," but the proceedings in the suit and the effect of the injunction order were freely discussed in the editorial columns of the "American Federationist," and commented on in public addresses by the officers of the Federation. On the ground of these publications and utterances, Messrs. Samuel Gompers, John Mitchell and Frank Morrison, president, vice-president and secretary, respectively, of the American Federation of Labor, were cited in July, 1908, to show cause why they should not be punished for having disobeyed Judge Gould's injunction order. The hearing on the application was very thorough. Every statement or act of the defendants in connection with Buck's Stove injunction was carefully and critically examined, and even the political speeches of Mr. Gompers, and the publication in the "American Federationist" of the injunction order itself, were made the basis of additional charges. The proceedings lasted several months, and terminated in a decision rendered by Judge Wright shortly after the general elections of 1908, by which the American Federation of Labor was denounced in scathing terms, and its principal officers, Gompers, Mitchell and Morrison, sentenced to jail terms ranging from one year to six months.

The Federation had always regarded court injunctions as the heaviest scourges of the labor movement, and had for years conducted an energetic campaign for the abolition of the use of that extraordinary mandate in labor disputes. But now, when its lash was applied to their own bodies in such a severe manner and with so little justification, the officers of the Federation threw the entire weight of their organization into the war against the injunction writ. A bill was introduced in the United States Congress aiming at the abolition of the use of injunctions in labor disputes, but notwithstanding all efforts and agitation of the American Federation of Labor, the bill was smothered in committee, and never even discussed in the House.

#### IN POLITICS AGAIN.

The Executive Council of the Federation thereupon convened an extraordinary conference of the chief officers of all international unions affiliated with it, in which representatives of the unaffiliated railway brotherhoods and of several farmers' organizations also participated. The conference was held at Washington, D. C., on March 18, 1908, and formulated a protest to Congress and an Address to the Workers. In the former document the labor leaders urged Congress to speedily enact legislation tending to right the wrongs inflicted on organized labor by recent decisions and acts of the courts, and the indiscriminate use of injunctions in controversies between employers and workers. In the Address to the Workers they called upon all labor unions to hold public meetings throughout the country and to pass resolutions urging Congress to enact such laws. The meetings were held and resolutions adopted, but Congress, in the words of Gompers, "adjourned, the majority party boastfully declaring its indifference to Labor's appeal and demand for justice." At this juncture the presidential elec-

tions of 1908 were approaching and all political parties were about to hold national nominating conventions. The Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor sent deputations to the conventions of each of the two leading parties, the Republican and Democratic, and presented to each of them a demand that it pledge its party to anti-injunction legislation along the lines advocated by the Federation. The Republican Party held itself strong enough to carry the election without the somewhat doubtful aid of the American Federation, and flatly refused to accede to its demands. The Democratic Party, on the other hand, weaker than the Republican, and making its appeal to the more radical portion of the community, eagerly availed itself of the opportunity to gain the support of organized labor, and accepted the demands of the Federation with great alacrity. This decided the political course of the officials of the American Federation of Labor in the electoral campaign of 1908. The "friends" to be rewarded in this election were all the Democratic candidates in the country, and the "enemies" to be punished were all the Republicans. Mr. Gompers and other prominent officials of the Federation were openly and consistently active in behalf of the Democratic candidates; they issued millions of leaflets and proclamations in support of the Democratic campaign, and called upon the affiliated trade unions to contribute money to the war chest of the Democratic Party. The American Federation of Labor almost suddenly found itself engrossed in a political campaign, but not as an independent political factor in accordance with the several resolutions from time to time passed by its conventions, but as a tail to the kite of the old capitalist parties.

The policy of Mr. Gompers in supporting the Democratic Party does not seem to have created much enthusiasm in the ranks of the American Federation of Labor. The labor vote promised, if it materialized at all, was not very strong; at any rate not strong enough to save Mr. Bryan, the Democratic candidate for President, from defeat, or to prevent the election of any of the most notorious foes of labor from among the Republican candidates for Congress. The American Federation of Labor had again missed a splendid opportunity for asserting its power as a working class party, and the greatest American organization of labor, with its million and a half of members and its tremendous influence in the world of labor, made a lamentably poor debut in politics.

#### OTHER LABOR ORGANIZATIONS.

The American Federation of Labor does not comprise all economic organizations of American labor. A large number, estimated at about three-quarters of a million, are organized in unaffiliated national and local unions and in general labor combinations of lesser importance. Among the latter are the remnants of the once powerful Order of Knights of Labor and the Industrial Workers of the World, organized some years ago. The Industrial Workers of the World claims a membership of about ten thousand, divided into one hundred or more local unions. It has so far entirely failed to justify the fond expectations of its organizers that it would remodel and regenerate the labor movement of America, and from present indications its prospects of greater success in the future are not very good. Within the last three years a movement for the establishment of workingmen's co-operative enterprises has sprung up sporadically in different parts of the country, and a few co-operative stores and shops have been launched on a small scale. The movement is as yet too young and weak to even warrant a prediction as to its success on American soil.

Faternally submitted,

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